

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-9 and 11-16 have been canceled.

In response to the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, Claim 10 has been amended to clarify that the carrier device is not a component of the claimed combination, which is instead merely associated therewith. The relative movement of the carrier has also been clarified.

Claims 2, 4 and 10-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by the U.S. patent to Hiroki, while Claims 5 and 11-12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over Hiroki. In response, Claim 10 has been further amended to recite:

(a) The processing vessel includes a first vessel member on which the holder is provided and a second vessel member arranged above the first vessel member. These two vessel members are operable to make a relative vertical movement therebetween from their respective united positions to their respective separated positions (set forth in original claim 13).

(b) The relative moving carrier is for causing the relative vertical movement such that the article temporarily held by the temporarily holding member at the intermediate position is transferred to the processing position.

(c) The second vessel member has a skirt portion surrounding the process chamber (shown in FIG. 7).

(d) The temporary holding member includes a plurality of rotatable shafts and a plurality of temporary-holding-member main bodies. Each of the rotatable shafts is mounted on a vertical axis in the skirt portion of the second vessel member and projects from the skirt portion toward the first vessel member. Each temporary-holding-member main body projects in a radial direction of the rotatable shaft therefrom. Then the position switcher rotates the

rotatable shafts to switch over the temporary holding member between the temporary holding position and the retracted position (set forth in original Claim 5).

(e) The temporary holding member transfers the article from the intermediate position to the process position on the holder with the relative and vertical movement of the two vessel members.

Amended Claim 10 clearly distinguishes over Hiroki. In the present invention, the processing vessel includes a first vessel member on which a holder is provided and a second vessel member with a skirt portion; the two vessel members are mounted for relative vertical movement therebetween from their respective united positions to their respective separated positions. The temporary holding member includes a plurality of rotatable shafts and a plurality of temporary-holding-member main bodies, each of the rotatable shafts mounted on a vertical axis in the skirt portion of the second vessel member and projecting from a bottom surface of the skirt portion toward the first vessel member. The relative vertical movement between the two vessel members can change the relative position between the holder and the temporary holding member, thus transferring the article from an intermediate position to a process position. There is no need for a chamber or the like for supporting and enclosing the temporary holding member.

Hiroki, on the other hand, discloses an processing apparatus comprising a temporarily holding member, i.e. “lifters 36 and 37,” and a holder, i.e. “worktable 23.” However both the lifters 36, 37 and the worktable 23 are enclosed in a common process chamber 12, and the lifters 36, 37 are disposed on the bottom of the process chamber 12 by the side of the worktable 23 and project upward. This arrangement of the lifters 36, 37 is quite different from that of the “temporary holding member” of the present invention in that the lifters 36, 37 do not project from “a skirt portion of the second vessel” but from the bottom of the process chamber 12, and do not project toward “a first vessel member” but toward an upper

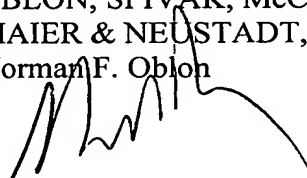
region of the process chamber 12. The amended claims are therefore believed to define over the Hiroki.

Concerning the rejection of dependent Claims 13-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over Hiroki in view of the U.S. patent to Fujikawa, it is respectfully submitted that these references do not teach the features of newly amended Claim 10.

Applicants therefore believe that the present application is in a condition for allowance and respectfully solicit an early Notice of Allowability.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,  
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.  
Norman F. Oblon



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Robert T. Pous  
Attorney of Record  
Registration No. 29,099

Customer Number  
**22850**

Tel: (703) 413-3000  
Fax: (703) 413 -2220  
(OSMMN 03/06)

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